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A

CENTURY SERMON

DELIVERED IN HOPKINTON

ON

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 24, 1815.

BY REV. NATHANAEL HOWE, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

2 Peter i. 13.—"YEA, I THINK IT MEET, AS LONG AS I AM IN THIS TABERNACLE, TO STIR YOU UP, BY PUTTING YOU IN REMEMBRANCE."

ANDOVER:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author had no reason to expect, when he wrote and delivered this Sermon, that it would be requested for the press. However, as it has been requested, he consents it should be made public: with this impression full upon his mind, that no person will think he has aimed at any thing more than truth, impartiality, perspicuity and precision. As it may occasion unpleasant feelings in the minds of some of his people, he requests them to consider, that it is as suitable to discover engagedness for the cause of truth, as to go to law for the sake of justice, or take physic for the sake of health.

The Author, therefore, dedicates this discourse to the people of his charge, with his best wishes for their peace, prosperity and eternal happiness.

16407

SERMON.

ECCLES. i. 4.

ONE GENERATION PASSETH AWAY, AND ANOTHER GENERATION COMETH; BUT THE EARTH ABIDETH FOREVER.

We live in a changing world; this truth is evident from our text, from our observation, and from our experience.

We have no need of going to the Bible to discover, that one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: we know it by our own observation. Where are the people who were old, twenty five years ago? They are dead, with only one exception. I remember that Mr. Joseph Cody was an old man, when I first saw him. All the rest are dead!

Where are those who were twenty five years ago, in the midst of life, active, useful and promising? All who are living, have now become old, and are drawing toward the grave; for the grey hairs are growing thick upon their heads.

Where are those who were young twenty five years ago? They have come forward to the midst of life, and fill the most active, honorable and useful stations. Some of them are Deacons of the Church. Magistrates of the Commonwealth. Selectmen of the Town. Military Officers of various grades. And others in more private stations, acting in different town offices; members of civil society; heads of families, &c.

And what shall I say more? Shall I say that more than half our inhabitants have been born within that time?

It now lacks less than twenty five days, of twenty five years, since my first coming to this place, to preach to this

people. At that time I had only arrived to a state of manhood; I had youth, activity, and a considerable share of sprightliness on my side; I am now old. I have lived to see more than half a century; the grey hairs are growing upon my head; the grinders cease because they are few; the keepers of the house tremble; my infirmities indicate, that I have but a few more years, or months, or days to live!

Is it not evident, *then*, that we live in a changing world? Is it not evident that one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever?

If we appeal to our own experience we shall find, that we live in a changing world. The seasons of the year are changing. Our circumstances are changing. Our relations are changing. The inhabitants of the world are changing. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.

There was formerly a man living in the kingdom of Great Britain, whose name was Edward Hopkins. This man was *not* one of those ignorant, selfish, narrow-contracted souls, who could think of nothing but himself, his family, and friends. He could think of America; an infant country, though it was three thousand miles distant. He could think of the benefits of education. His enlarged mind took into view the difficulties of educating youth, in an infant country, to fill important stations in Church and State.

In the year 1636, the General Court granted four hundred pounds to erect a College within the Commonwealth. In the next year they voted that the College should be erected in that part of Newtown, which is now called Cambridge. The year following they decreed that the College should be called Harvard College, in honor of the Rev. John Harvard, who had bequeathed his library, and upward of seven hundred pounds for the benefit of the College.

In the year 1642, the General Court established a board of Overseers. In 1650, the Charter of the Corporation was granted. And in the year 1657, Edward Hopkins Esq. made his will.

The Father of Spirits had not only endowed 'Squire Hopkins with an enlarged mind, but he had given him a great estate ; and what was of vastly more importance, he had given him a benevolent heart.

'Squire Hopkins was a man of great wealth ; his estate was estimated at twenty thousand pounds sterling; equal in value to $88888,88. Eight hundred pounds sterling of this property was given to be laid out in lands, three fourths for the benefit of the College, and one fourth for the benefit of the Grammar School in Cambridge. That is to say, $2666,66 were given to the College, and $888, 88 to the Grammar School in Cambridge. This was given "for the breeding up of youth in the way of learning for the public service of the country in future times." —"For the upholding and propagating of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." These are expressions taken from the will of Edward Hopkins Esq. In the year 1710, it was ordered that this money should be laid out in lands. This donation of 'Squire Hopkins to Harvard College was the money which first purchased Hopkinton, which in its original state contained what is now called Hopkinton, about three thousand acres of Upton, and five hundred acres of Holliston. The lands began to be settled between 1710, and 1712. On the 13th day of December, (Old Style,) which according to the present mode of reckoning brings it to the 24th day of December, 1715, this town was incorporated. This day, therefore, is the beginning of a new Century, to the inhabitants of this place.

As the town was purchased by the donation of 'Squire Hopkins to Harvard College, the lands were to be leased out to tenants, at one penny sterling per acre, to be paid

annually to the College to the year 1823, and three pence of like money afterward. Twelve thousand five hundred acres were to be leased out to tenants; the residue to be common land, to be divided among the tenants to enable them the better to pay the quit rents; and moreover, the tenants were to pay a province tax, for what they were worth, above the rents reserved.

It is natural to suppose these considerations would lead many people in indigent circumstances to come, and to settle here: the town, therefore, increased rapidly in population for a number of years.

May 21, 1723. The town "voted to have preaching constantly on the Sabbath." May 20, 1724, they voted to give Mr. Barrett "sixty pounds, in day-labor, oxen's work, boards, shingles, clapboards, slitwork, and other materials to build him a house; and if not paid in those articles, to be paid in money." The same day they voted to give Mr. Barrett thirty five pounds, in addition to the cutting and carting his firewood for three years; and seventy pounds afterward with the cutting and carting his firewood to be his annual salary, during his ministry. On the 2d day of September following, a Congregational Church was gathered, consisting of fifteen members. Their names were, Samuel Barrett, Samuel Wadkins, William Montgomery, Robert Hamilton, Samuel Wark, Benjamin Burnap, Robert Cook, Elnathan Allen, John Wood, Joseph Haven, Robert Huston, William Dunaghoi, Patrick Hamilton, Obediah Allen, and Jacob Gibbs. These were the only members of the Church when it was formed. The same day the Rev. Samuel Barrett, a native of Boston, who graduated at Harvard College in 1721, was ordained Pastor of said Church. This was at a period of our country when ministers were respected, public worship attended, family religion and family government were maintained, morality and piety prevailed.

But in the course of a few years a dissension took place; a large number had been admitted to communion; some of whom proved themselves unworthy of their Christian standing.

It appears on record, that on the ninth day of April 1731, the Church voted to comply with the Cambridge Platform of church discipline. This gave great offence. James Montgomery and his mother, Robert Cook and his wife, William Hinry, Walter Stewart, Robert Huston and his wife, John Hamilton, Robert Barrett and the widow Hamilton, and others, absented themselves from communion. The elders therefore were sent by the Church to inquire of these delinquents, the reasons of their absenting themselves from the Lord's Supper. They replied, they had laid the matter before ministers, and if their advice was such as they could not comply with, they meant to leave the town.

When the Church insisted on knowing their reasons, it was replied, that the Church had altered their mode of government; that they had received members from Framingham without a dismission; and that they were not under obligation to keep covenant with such a Church.

On June 14, 1732, Joseph Bixby and Joseph Haven were ordained to the office of ruling Elders in the Church. Also Benjamin Burnap and Henry Mellen were ordained Deacons. On this occasion the Rev. Thomas Prince, and the Rev. John Webb, both pastors of churches in the town of Boston were present and assisted.

This, with the other causes before mentioned, led part of the members of the Church to separate and absent themselves from communion. These offended brethren formed a society, built a meeting house, and maintained their separation for a number of years. There is no account that they ever had a minister. It is more than probable, that they met together, sung, prayed, and ex-

horted one another. But in process of time, their zeal abated, their society dwindled, their meeting house decayed, some died, others sold and removed; and a number of years after they had been admonished and suspended by the Church, those who remained in town returned, made concessions to the Church, and were restored to their former standing, and admitted to communion.

Thus we see that this society, formed by prejudice and passion, when the fever of the moment had abated, sunk and disappeared.

This difficulty, however, which originated in the year 1731, was not completely settled till the year 1738.

As the Rev. Samuel Barrett's ministry was lengthy, honorable, and successful, I shall divide it into five different periods of ten years each, except the last, which was about eight years and three months.

In the first ten years of his ministry, there were 146 admitted to full communion;—58 owned the covenant;—206 received the ordinance of baptism;—and 41 couples were joined in marriage.

In the second ten years of his ministry there was a difficulty existing between this Church and the churches of Framingham and Shrewsbury, respecting the admission of members from those churches, who had not been regularly recommended and dismissed. After repeated exertions to settle it, a Council was called consisting of the Rev. Mr. Cheever of Rumney-Marsh, Rev. Mr. Moody of York, Rev. Mr. Wise of Berwick, Rev. Mr. White of Gloucester, Rev. Messrs. Thatcher, Webb, Dr. Sewall, Prince, Gee, and Mather, pastors of churches in the town of Boston, with their delegates.

The 25th day of June 1735 was appointed for the Council to meet. When it was ascertained that this large, learned, and venerable Ecclesiastical Council could not be convened, on account of the distance, season of the

year, &c. the Church voted to strike out Mr. Moody, Mr. White, and Mr. Wise, and send to the church in Sudbury; but the Council were providentially detained from meeting. The Church then voted to send again to the same Council with the addition of the Church in Berwick. *Voted*, That the third Wednesday of September be the time for the Council to meet. Voted also, to add Mr. Moody, and his son from York, to the Council.

This Ecclesiastical Council convened, at the time and place, and after mature consideration of the subject, they resulted in favor of the doings of this Church. The Church voted thanks to the Council, requested the Rev. Mr. Gee of Boston to be present at the reading of the result, and voted to comply with the result of the Council.

In this period, that is, from Sept. 2, 1734 to Sept. 2, 1744, there were 90 admitted to full communion;—42 owned the covenant;—289 were baptised;—and 44 couples joined in marriage.

In the third period of ten years of the Rev. Mr. Barrett's ministry, there were troublous times. Mr. Whitefield, Buel, Tennant and other ministers were travelling through the country, and preaching with uncommon animation and success. No doubt by their doctrines, zeal and oratory they did vast good; but like all other human beings, they were imperfect, and sometimes indiscreet. Mr. Whitefield acknowledged very freely, the last time he travelled through the country, that he had done wrong in speaking against the standing order of ministers as he had done formerly; that he should not have done it, had he been more acquainted with them. These animated, ardent preachers, drew away the affections of many people from their own ministers.

At this time Mr. Barrett, *for a season*, lost the confidence and affections of some of the most serious and pious people in town. The late deacon Moses Haven

and others absented themselves from Mr. Barrett's ministry, and joined with the Rev. Mr. Reed's society in Framingham; sometimes hearing him, and sometimes the Rev. Mr. Frost of Milford: but when the fervor of their affection abated, they returned to this Society, respected Mr. Barrett, lived under his ministry, and were edified. About this time the Rev. Roger Price, a clergyman of the episcopalian order, came to this town, purchased a large tract of land, built a church, and endowed it with a glebe containing one hundred and seventy acres; preached here about three years, and returned to England. Soon after this, he sent the Rev. Mr. Troulback, who officiated here for some time, and then removed. Since his removal, there have been only a few solitary instances of that mode of worship for nearly sixty years. I have never heard but what the Rev. Mr. Barrett and the Rev. Mr. Price lived in great harmony, though they were of different religious denominations, and lived within a few rods of each other. And we have the more reason to believe this, from the circumstance, that the descendants of the Rev. Mr. Price have been unusually kind and beneficent to the descendants of the Rev. Mr. Barrett. During this period, that is, from Sept. 2, 1744 to Sept. 2, 1754, 26 were admitted to full communion;—43 owned the covenant;—288 were baptised;—and 44 couples were joined in marriage.

In the fourth period of ten years of the Rev. Mr. Barrett's ministry, that is, from Sept. 2, 1754 to Sept. 2, 1764, the state of this people was more tranquil and happy. Mr. Barrett's character was established, his wisdom had been manifested, and his stability was undoubted. He had sustained the office of a gospel minister for thirty years. He had stood firm and unshaken through times of violence, intrigue, and faction. Neither contention, nor division, nor separation, could divert him from his course. Mr. Barrett was not an animated preacher, but he was

sensible, orthodox, and exemplary. The Historical Society of Massachusetts have published his character as follows:—"He was a pious, good Christian, a man of great candor, and good nature." This appears to me, in some measure, to fall short of his real excellence; they ought to have added, a man of great stability and perseverance.

In this period he admitted 31 persons to full communion;—72 owned the covenant;—337 were baptised;—and 70 couples were joined in marriage.

In the last period of the Rev. Mr. Barrett's ministry, which consisted of eight years and three months, his activity abated; his faculties were diminished; but in this period, he admitted 15 persons to full communion;—32 owned the covenant;—193 were baptised;—52 couples were joined in marriage;—but we have no account of deaths.

Mr. Barrett called a church meeting, Dec. 2, 1771, for the purpose of choosing a colleague pastor to assist him in the decline of life. But "by reason of age and infirmity," as the records state, he was unable to preside at said meeting; however, the Church proceeded, and unanimously made choice of Mr. Elijah Fitch for a colleague pastor. On the fifteenth day of January 1772, the Rev. Elijah Fitch was ordained; and on the eleventh of the December following, the Rev. Samuel Barrett died, in the seventy second year of his age, and the forty ninth year of his ministry. Thus he died, like God's ancient and faithful servant Job, "being old and full of days."

As the Trustees of Hopkins' donation to Harvard College gave Mr. Barrett one hundred acres of land, adjoining this meeting house, for his own personal use and behoof forever, because he was the first minister; so also they gave him another hundred acres of land, which was given to him, his heirs, assigns, and successors; which is

called the ministerial land, and is now in my possession. As Mr. Barrett lived at a time when black people were slaves, and had them for servants ;—and beside this, had in Boston wealthy and benevolent connexions, by whose liberality he was furnished with such things as he needed ;—and, in addition to this, had seventy pounds, with the cutting and carting his firewood, for his annual salary ; —we have reason to believe he had a comfortable support, though the people were generally poor. The Rev. Mr. Barrett left but one child, a son, who departed this life March 10, 1800, who was exemplary, industrious, and inoffensive.

The Rev. Elijah Fitch was ordained, as we have before said, on the fifteenth day of January 1772. Almost eleven months before the death of the reverend Mr. Barrett. Mr. Fitch was a native of Connecticut ; born in the town of Windham ; educated at Yale College ; graduated in the year 1765. He was a man of great powers of mind. He possessed a sound judgment. He was somewhat reserved in mixt companies, but in the pulpit he was remarkably eloquent. He was unassuming ; a man of meekness and candor ; a man of humility and benevolence ; he was patient, industrious, and persevering. His life was spent in one continual series of exertion for the good of his church, people, and family. Perhaps no man, with his advantages and income, could have left his family in better circumstances than he did.

Mr. Fitch was not rigid in his religious opinions ; he was considered a moderate Calvinist. He was respected by his own people, and esteemed by the neighboring religious societies. During his ministry, which lacked one month of seventeen years, he admitted 37 persons to full communion ;—100 owned the covenant ;—422 were baptised ;—189 couples were joined in marriage ;—and in this time there were 316 deaths. In the first year of Mr.

Fitch's ministry there were 39 deaths; 20 of them were occasioned by the canker.

In the year 1775, when the army lay in and about Cambridge, there were 45 deaths; 29 of these were occasioned by the dysentary. This was probably the greatest mortality, that has taken place in any one year, since the town was settled. In the year 1788 there were only ten deaths; the Rev. Elijah Fitch was the last of that number.

When the town voted to concur with the Church in giving Mr. Fitch a call to settle with them in the ministry, they gave him $444,44 for his settlement, and $200 annually for his salary. This was at a time when provisions were low, land was cheap, labor easily obtained, and at a moderate price. Within three years of this time, paper money was emitted, and it depreciated from one degree to another, till Mr. Fitch's salary, for a year, would only pay a common hired man for six months' labor. The Rev. Mr. Fitch was liberally educated,—regularly introduced into the ministry,—necessitated to keep an horse to enable him to discharge the duties of his office, to attend funerals, visit the sick, &c., to board his hired man, and himself, and then his whole salary for a year would only pay a hired man, for six months' labor!

Is there no bounds to oppression, injustice, and cruelty? I confess for myself I know of none. This was in the time of the revolutionary war, when our liberties were in danger, and our country in distress; but after the peace, the town had so much sense of honor and duty, as to raise Mr. Fitch's salary from sixty to seventy pounds lawful money, and that continued to be his salary while he lived.

But after Mr. Fitch's death, the town had so little compassion on the widow and fatherless, that they took the ministerial land into their own hands, without any lawful right, and applied the profits of that to their own use, which

was given by the Trustees of Hopkins' donation to Harvard College, " to the Rev. Samuel Barrett and his successors in the ministry."

However Mr. Fitch was not only an industrious man himself, but he had an industrious family. He left an amiable and pious widow, and five children. The eldest daughter, who had professed and practised religion while she was well, sickened and died about five years after her father. The eldest son is the Rev. John Fitch of Danville, in the State of Vermont, who has been minister of that town for more than twenty years, and is now one of the most respectable ministers in that State.

The eldest daughter, now living, is with her mother, and well known to the generality of this assembly. The youngest son is Deacon Elijah Fitch, chosen to that office by an uncommon unanimity, having had all the votes except his own, or all but one except his own. And the youngest daughter is Mrs. Betsey Rawson, the wife of the Rev. Nathanael Rawson of Hardwick, in the State of Vermont.

All amiable characters, all professors of religion, all of one denomination, adorning their profession by a pious life.

Whose descendants can vie with the descendants of the Rev. Elijah Fitch?

It is true the family were never wealthy, but they have always been respected. Such was the rise, progress, character and success, and such the descendants of the Rev. Elijah Fitch.

In the former part of his ministry he enjoyed good health, and an uncommon share of activity; but two years before his death, he was unwell and unable to preach through the winter. In the spring he recovered partially, was able, and continued to preach till the April preceding his death. The Rev. Elijah Fitch lived beloved, and died lamented

by his numerous acquaintance and friends. He departed this life Dec. 16, 1788, in the 43d year of his age, and 17th year of his ministry.

Thus we see "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh;" and passeth away, "but the earth abideth forever."

Not only the ministers, but the people have been dying from year to year. In the forty years last past there have been not less than 700 deaths; and is it not reasonable to suppose that in the sixty years preceding there were as many deaths, as there have been in the forty years following? Admitting this to be a reasonable calculation, we may conclude there have been since the incorporation of the town 1400 deaths; which is equal to the number of our present inhabitants. After the funeral of the Rev. Mr. Fitch, the bearers supplied for a considerable time, and then candidates were employed.

The Rev. Solomon Adams late of Middleton, deceased, was your first candidate. Rev. Joshua Cushman late of Winslow, Rev. Stephen Baxter late of Western, Rev. Pearson Thurston late of Sommersworth, Rev. Alden Bradford formerly of Wiscasset, now Secretary of State for this Commonwealth, Rev. Gordon Dorrance of Windsor, and a Mr. Stone of Shrewsbury, who preached here four Sabbaths, the two last in December 1790, and the two first in January 1791. The weather was unfavourable, and the travelling bad, and in no one of those Sabbaths were there so many as thirty persons assembled in this house to worship God!

At this time your present minister was engaged to come and preach to this people as a candidate. He was employed by a committee consisting of 'Squire M'Farland, Mr. Henry Mellen, and Dr. Stimson Esq. After preaching here for three months, from the third Sabbath in January, then being absent a few weeks to fulfil a former en-

gagement, he returned to preach to this people, and on the May following received a unanimous call from the Church to settle as their pastor. On May 19th the town "voted to concur with the Church, provided Mr. Howe consents to admit children to baptism, whose parents are in the half-way covenant, so called."

The half-way covenant was a scheme devised by our forefathers, assembled in synod, 1662, to determine, who were the proper subjects of baptism; and they decided, "that church members, who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto, not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in his Church, their children are to be baptised."

This scheme inclined persons, who had no reason to think themselves qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper, to make this kind of profession and have their children baptised. At this time, there were probably more than twice the number, who belonged to the half-way covenant, than there were who belonged to the Church in full communion; for my reverend predecessor had admitted one hundred to that covenant, and only thirty seven to full communion during his ministry. This call of the town was presented by a large and respectable committee, consisting of Deacon Moses Haven, Mr. Jacob Gibbs, Col. John Jones, Deacon Stephen Kinsman, Mr. Barachias Morse, Col. Nathan Perry, and Maj. William Price. When the call was presented and read, I took occasion to observe to the committee, that I had never been convinced that the half-way covenant could be supported by scripture, and I could not consent to baptise in that way, till I was convinced; and if that was a fixed condition in the minds of the town, I could give them an answer at that

time as well as any other. Mr. Morse inquired if that was the only objection I had to settling here? to which I answered, it appeared to be the greatest. Upon which it was proposed to have another town meeting, and see what compromise could be made.

When the town assembled, I attended, and when called upon stated—"That no difference in sentiment respecting the half-way covenant, so called, should prevent me from exchanging with any of the regular gospel ministers in this neighborhood; and although it does not appear to me to be right, to administer the ordinance of baptism in this way; and I cannot consistently do it before I am convinced it is right; yet I think I feel myself disposed to give other people the same liberty, with respect to religion, I take for myself.

"Therefore whenever I exchange, if the minister with whom I exchange thinks he can conscientiously baptise children by the half-way covenant, and those, who are in that covenant, think they can conscientiously offer their children, I shall not feel myself under obligation to object against their doing what appears to them to be right.

"And that every man may see, that I am disposed to be fair and plain; and that no difficulty may ever arise concerning this matter, I say further, that, notwithstanding I am opposed to that practice; yet, if the Church and the minister with whom I exchange think proper to take any more into the half-way covenant, I shall treat them in the same manner, I do those, who are already in that covenant."

This town meeting was on July 18, 1791, at which time the town voted "to concur with the Church in giving Mr. Nathanael Howe a call to be their gospel minister, upon the proposals Mr. Howe has now offered."

Also, "voted to ratify the doings of the town on the nineteenth of May last, respecting Mr. Howe's settlement

and salary," that was, to give two hundred pounds settlement, and seventy pounds salary, in addition to the improvement of the ministerial land.

Our pious forefathers with good intent, no doubt, devised the half-way covenant. Being alarmed at the declining numbers of the Church, and the corresponding increase of the unbaptised, depending on human wisdom, and distrusting the divine faithfulness, this plan was devised and adopted: and when it was introduced into the Churches, it occasioned contentions, divisions, and separations; as you may see by reading Mather's Magnalia. When it was discovered that its tendency was to destroy the Church; for if every person joined in that way, there would be no Church, when it was discovered that its tendency was to injure the persons received, by making them think they had done their duty, when they had not; and to pervert the ordinance of baptism, by administering it to unsuitable subjects:—it was opposed both by ministers and Churches. And it occasioned as much contention and opposition to lay it aside, as to introduce it. That erroneous practice is now dead; only fourteen have been baptised by that covenant since my ordination; none within fifteen years last past; and none have been admitted since my introduction to office.

In the first year of my ministry, I leased a part of the ministerial common to Maj. Burnap, during my ministry; the said Burnap was to clear the land, fence it, subdue the bushes, and keep the fences in good repair; on these conditions I believed it would be as valuable to my successor, as to myself. This however, gave great offence. It occasioned a town meeting, which I attended; but previous to the town meeting I had agreed with Maj. Burnap to rescind the bargain.

The town complained that I was making an unsuitable use of the ministerial common; to which I replied, that the

land was lawfully mine, during my ministry; for it was not given to the town, but to "the Rev. Samuel Barrett and his successors." I then complained that the town had been inattentive in their obligations to me; not having paid the salary they promised. For on Nov. 2, 1792 they granted my first year's salary, which was almost a month after the first year expired. And not one cent of the first year's salary had been granted, assessed, or paid; and at that time I owed no man in town a single shilling. This difficulty was settled on Jan. 14, 1793, by my offering to relinquish my right to the ministerial common, on the condition, the town would pay the salary on the day they promised, or put it on interest. This was a good bargain both for me, and the town, for it secured to me my salary, at the time appointed, which has been a great benefit; and it secured to the town the ministerial common land, without any expense, provided they punctually fulfilled their obligations to me.

About this time, 'Squire M'Farland and Mr. Henry Mellen, two of our principal men, left this society, and joined the Methodists, because they were dissatisfied with the doctrines here delivered. But not finding themselves so agreeably situated as they expected, they returned to this society. Mr. Mellen is since dead; and 'Squire M'Farland has manifested his regard to the Sabbath, and public worship, by attending very constantly, though he has never approved of my religious or political sentiments.

At this time, a brother of the Church left our communion, and joined the Methodists: the Church dealt with him as an offender, and seeing he did not reform, excommunicated him.

The Church passed a vote May 13, 1790, the year before I came to town, that if any should omit praying with their families, or omit public worship, or communion, or be found from time to time disguised with strong drink,

they should be under the immediate admonition of the Church. It was found that one brother did not pray with his family; he was dealt with as an offender, and seeing he did not reform, was excommunicated.

When the public took sides upon politics, your minister was a Federalist, though he was sensible a very great majority of the town, were of different sentiments. He believed then, as he believes now, that he ought to have more regard to his country, than to any particular part of it: and when he has occasionally preached political sermons, they have repeatedly occasioned uncomfortable feelings.

Another difficulty your minister has had to encounter, was the want of support. A vast change has taken place, in the expenses of dressing and living since my ordination, and yet no addition has been made to my salary.

When a candidate, I determined I would never settle, till I saw a reasonable prospect of a comfortable support, and when settled, that I would never complain of my salary. I remained of this mind, till I had been your minister for fifteen years.

Born down with the fatigues of manual labor, pressed into the woods in the winter, to the plough in the spring, and into the meadow in the summer, to support my family comfortably, and fulfil my promises, I felt the business of the ministry was greatly neglected;—that it was impossible for me to do what ought to be done in my profession, unless the people did more toward my support.

I committed my thoughts to paper, then communicated them to four brethren of the Church, then to the Church as a body, and afterward to the town.

As there has been much misunderstanding, and many misrepresentations upon this matter, I will read it again, and then the doings of the town thereon.*

* "*To the Brethren of the Church of Christ in Hopkinton.*

" Beloved Brethren,

" When you gave me a call to settle with you in the Gospel min-

When my communication was read to Deacon Joseph Walker, Maj. Burnap, Mr. Benjamin Adams, and 'Squire

istry, and the Town had concurred and made their proposals, I took the matter under serious consideration. I considered the unanimity of the Church and Town, as favourable circumstances, and the proposals that were made with respect to my support, as reasonable, though not large. The ministerial land I was sensible was good, though the state of cultivation was very bad, and the fences extremely poor. It then appeared to me, if I should be favoured with prosperity, with the knowledge I thought I had of agriculture, that I should be able to support a family. With those views I gave my answer in the affirmative, was ordained, and soon had a family. At this time, every article of provision was low, labor was cheap, and my income was sufficient for my support. But within two years from my ordination, money began to depreciate, and the price of labor to rise; my salary has continued depreciating and labor rising, till it is not worth more than half what it was, when I was settled.

" I have always been sensible of the difficulty of transacting money business, with any people; and from this impression have labored with my hands, to make provision for my family, and fulfil my promises: I have scarcely ever suffered myself to make any complaints; but I find at present, that my expenses are increasing, and my income decreasing. This has led me into considerable perplexity with respect to my duty. If I ask a dismission and remove, it must be with a considerable loss of property. If I remain as I am, I see no reason to expect any better times. If I exert myself more in laboring with my hands, it must be disadvantageous both to you, and me; for then I must neglect my professional business. If I advertise my house and land for sale, it will appear precipitate. If I propose to the town to purchase it for the next minister, and ask them to dismiss me; I know not how this will operate. I do not *wish to leave the ministry;* but if I should ever remove, it is full time, for I have probably spent the best part of my life among you. Fifteen years ago, the expense of candidate preaching was four or five dollars a Sabbath: now it is eight or ten. Then the members of our general court had one dollar per day, now they have two dollars per day. A common laborer at that time, had fifty five, or sixty dollars per year; now they have 130, 140, and some 150 dollars a year.

Is it reasonable then, for ministers to be satisfied with the nominal sum, when it is not worth more than half its original value? I make no pretence to any lawful claim; but in point of equity, is it not reasonable? I grant that when two parties have made an agreement, the one cannot dissolve it, without the consent of the other. I am sensible it is very difficult for us to know many things except what we know by experience; and therefore, it is very difficult for any people to feel for their minister, because they are not in his circumstances. Brethren, we have lived in a good degree of harmony for years past, which I hope will never be interrupted. This society perhaps enjoys as much harmony at present, as at any former period;

Chamberlain, they lamented the circumstance, but thought it proper to lay the matter before the Church for their advice.

and are abundantly able to make up the depreciation on my salary, if they are so disposed: but this must depend entirely on their choice.

"In these circumstances, Brethren, I request your advice. Shall I ask a dismission? Or, shall I ask to have the depreciation made up on my salary? Shall I ask the town to purchase my house and land? Or shall I advertise it in a public paper? Or ought I to remain satisfied as I am?

"It costs me this year one hundred and fifty dollars for one man's labor, who cannot do my business either winter or summer; and if I add to this sum the reasonable expense of his board, it will amount to as much as the town pay to my support. It will be said that the ministerial land is much more productive than formerly: this is true; but how comes it to pass? Is it not in consequence of the labor and expense I have been at, to cultivate and fence it? Some years I have expended as much on the land, as the whole of the income.

"If it should be said I have other income, I ask; Is it right for me to spend the property that was left to my wife, by her parents, while I am preaching to a people well able to support me? When, perhaps, by and by, she may be left in poverty and distress?

"If a farm be let out at the halves, the buildings and fences will soon be out of repair, and the land impoverished. If all the labor be hired to carry on a farm, and pay the other expenses, the income to the owner will be but small. I say these things to show you my situation, and to convince you, that should I ask a dismission in a few months, you ought not to think it unreasonable. If any should be disposed to make an addition to my salary, on account of the depreciation, this will be likely to make difficulty; the people will not be agreed in it, and beside, no addition would be satisfactory, except it be granted to continue, till such times as labor and provisions fall in their prices as low as when I was ordained; then I would relinquish it: and if they ever fall below what they were then, I will consent to take less than seventy pounds for my salary. I do not say these things, because I think the town would be willing to make up the depreciation in full, perhaps, not in part. If they made up what I thought was equal to half the depreciation, I should rest satisfied. As the relation between Pastor and Church is quite distinct from the relation between minister and people, I have thought it my duty to make this statement to you, before any thing be said to the town, and to request your opinion and advice upon it. It is not my expectation, that any thing should be done for the fifteen years that are past: and if the town would now state my salary, on labor, corn, rye, cider, butter and cheese, beef and pork, at the price they bore on the day of my ordination, I would consent to take sixty pounds for my salary. If any should think it disadvantageous to the town for me to be dismissed and remove, they must know, on the least reflection, that it will probably be attended with more loss to me, than to any other person.

When it was read to the Church, sixteen brethren were present; fourteen of whom advised me to ask the town for

"With the hope and expectation that you, brethren, will be enabled and disposed to advise me in this case to what will be wisest, and best, I subscribe myself your friend and Pastor, in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

"NATHANAEL HOWE.

"*To the Church of Christ in Hopkinton.*"

Oct. 20, 1806. This was read to Deacon Joseph Walker, and three other brethren, viz. Benjamin Adams, I. Burnap, and Moses Chamberlain.

Nov. 10, 1806. The Church met at the request of their Pastor, to give him their advice, what he ought to do, in the present depreciated state of his salary, and they advised him to ask to have the depreciation made up. And he observed to them, that if that was their advice, he would thank them to carry it into effect. They then voted to request the selectmen, (a majority of whom were present, and members of the Church) to call a town meeting within five weeks, to see if the town will add fifty per cent to the salary, till such time as labor and provisions fall in their prices as low as when he was ordained.

The town met on Dec. 15, 1806. Mr. Howe was called upon to read to the town the communication, he had made to the Church. Upon which the vote was put, "To see if the town will (on account of the depreciation of money) add $116,67 to the yearly salary of the Rev. Nathanael Howe, till such time as labor and provisions fall in their prices, as low as when he was ordained. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town would add $116,67 till such time as the members of our general court receive less than two dollars per day for their services. This was negatived by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town will add $116,67 for seven years, from the first day of January next. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town will make up one half the depreciation on his salary from this time while he continues their minister. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town will in future give him two hundred dollars for his annual salary, and average it on labor, corn, rye, cider, butter and cheese, beef and pork. at the prices they bore on the day of his ordination. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town will purchase his house and land and keep it for the next minister. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

Then Mr. Howe proposed to see if the town will request the Church by a vote to grant him a dismission. This passed in the negative by a large majority.

an addition to my salary, and two were opposed to it. And in town meeting there were only three of the fourteen who advised me to ask it, who held up their hands in favour of it; viz. Deacon Joseph Walker, Maj. Isaac Burnap, and Mr. Benjamin Adams;—and only three of the town; viz. 'Squire Stimson, Col. J. Valentine and Mr. Samuel Goddard.

The reason of my fixing on that sum, and not being willing to accept of less, was because a less sum would do me no good. If I had an addition to my salary, I must pay more attention to the ministry; and if not, I must continue to supply the wants of my family by the labor of my hands. It was plain the town were unwilling to make that addition, although it was only one half of what justice and equity required them to do; and it has always afforded me pleasure, to think I had opportunity to show, I did not value an hundred dollars, as much as the people generally did an hundred cents: for but few would have had more than one dollar annually to have paid, above the nominal sum, to have furnished me with as much as I needed. Some have supposed that the town did nothing that day, because they granted no money; but in this they were greatly deceived; for they convinced me, I could place no dependance on their justice and equity; and that I must take care of myself, or perish. This opened my eyes in every direction, and employed my hands every day.

As it has been frequently said, that the town would have done something handsome, had I not stipulated the sum which they must grant, or nothing, they have had

Then Mr. Howe said he had but one proposition more to make; which was to see if the town were willing he should publish the communication he had made to the Church, and read to the town this day, and all the doings of the town thereon. And this also passed in the negative by a large majority.

Attest, EPHRAIM READ, *Town Clerk.*

reason since to think, that in this also they were greatly deceived; for when the town had a meeting the next year, through the instrumentality of Deacon Fiske, to show their benevolence, and their regard to justice and equity, there was a tie;—the moderator, the late Col. Eames, could not determine the vote: the meeting was adjourned for two weeks, and at that time there was a handsome majority in favour of doing nothing.

You are sensible, that my health has sometimes been poor, and my mind greatly depressed: poverty has stared me in the face.

My brethren, may I ask a question, a plain, simple question? How shall I obtain your consent? Shall I take silence for consent? Your countenances discover a willingness.

The question is this: Do you know by what means I have become *so rich*, as to have a great house, finished and furnished; a farm, a herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, horses, and money at interest? I say nothing about my debts to day.

Shall I answer the question?—The principal reason is this: because I have been doing *your business*, and neglecting *my own*.—What is your business?—Your business is to support your minister; and that is what I have been doing, for more than twenty years. And what is *my business?*—My business is to study, and preach; and in this I have never abounded. It is true, I have been absent from public worship, not more than four or five Sabbaths, for twenty five years; but I have frequently been present, and attempted to preach, when it has been mortifying to me, and could not have been edifying to you. I have sometimes administered reproof, both to the Church and the society, in a manner that has been thought to discover some degree of severity; but in these cases you

have always had good sense enough to know, you richly deserved it.

My object in preaching has been to explain, defend, and enforce, what have appeared to me the true doctrines of the gospel, *God's decrees*; for it must be glad tidings of great joy to all people, that God governs the world;—that his government is not only perfect, but universal, and lays the only solid foundation for foreknowledge; for nothing can be *certainly foreknown*, that is not fixed in the Divine Decree.

The divinity of Christ:—this lays the only solid foundation for the sufficiency of the atonement made for all mankind.

The doctrine of personal election from eternity to everlasting life, as the only doctrine that makes it absolutely certain, that any of our sinful race will be saved.

The doctrine of total depravity, as laying the only solid foundation for regeneration.

Regeneration by the agency of the Spirit of God, as laying the foundation for all holy exercises in the hearts of men.

Justification by faith alone, which is the same thing as Divine forgiveness.

The certain and final perseverance of the saints, "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" the eternity of hell torments, and the duties of morality. I have always believed and always preached, that a good life is the best evidence of a good heart.

I have aimed to persuade you to follow Christ; but not in his circumcision, nor in his keeping the passover, nor in his baptism; for that was "to fulfil all righteousness,"—"to manifest Christ to Israel," and introduce him into the ministry. If you follow Christ in his baptism, you must be baptised without *professing* either faith or repentance. An innocent person cannot repent;—Christ professed no re-

pentance; and it would be absurd to suppose he professed faith in himself. The new testament dispensation began, when the Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. "For where a Testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." The *death of Christ* ratified the New Testament, and introduced the gospel dispensation. My object has been to persuade you to follow Christ in his patience, in his meekness, in his humility, in his self denial, in his forgiveness of injuries, in his piety to his Father, and benevolence to all mankind.

During my ministry among you, 84 persons have been admitted to full communion. There have been 172 baptisms.—235 couples have been joined in marriage,—167 deaths.—27 members of this Church have been dismissed and recommended to the watch, and fellowship of other Churches,—and 8 have been excommunicated.

Those gentlemen of this society, who have some years past extended the hand of charity, in equity, for my relief, will receive my gratitude.

Those ladies, who four years ago presented me with an elegant and costly surplice, will accept my grateful acknowledgments. But my obligation for that favour, great as it was, bears no comparison with the gratitude I feel *to those*, who have expressed *by their practice*, peculiar kindness and attention to Eliza,* in her lengthy and distressing illness; such kindnesses cannot be described, nor repaid;—may God reward them. If any have injured me, whether in word, or deed, they will accept my forgiveness. And if I have injured any, I have only to say, in the language of our Saviour;—"When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you, your trespasses."

* Eliza, was the author's eldest daughter, who had been sick of a consumption for more than two years, and died the Wednesday following the delivery of this sermon; in the 22d year of her age.

The Rev. Nathanael Howe was born in that part of the town of Ipswich, which belongs to Linebrook parish, Oct. 6, 1764:—graduated at Harvard College 1786:—ordained Pastor of the Church in this town, Oct. 5, 1791; and has continued in the ministry, for more than twenty four years.

As I have given you an account of the Pastors of this Church, from the time it was formed; of the number of admissions, amounting in the whole to 444; of the baptisms, amounting to 1907; I will give you an account of the Deacons.

Deacon Benjamin Burnap.
Deacon Joseph Haven.
Deacon Joseph Bixby.
Deacon Henry Mellen.
Deacon Jason Walker.
Deacon Moses Haven.
Deacon Stephen Kinsman.
Deacon Joseph Walker.
Deacon Abel Fisk.
Deacon Samuel Walker.
Deacon Elijah Fitch.

Those gentlemen, who have received a liberal education from this town are—

The Rev. Elias Haven graduated in	- -	1733
Rev. John Mellen	- - - -	1741
Dr. John Wilson	- - - -	1741
Rev. Benjamin Caryl	- - - -	1761
Rev. Moses Adams	- - - -	1771
Dr. Jonathan Eames	- - - -	1775
Rev. John Fitch	- - - -	1790
Dr. Gilbert Dench	- - - -	1793
Leonard Mellen Esq.	- - - -	1797
Rev. Daniel Loring	- - - -	1800
Rev. Josiah Moulton	- - - -	1802

Dr. Jeremy Stimson - - - -	1804
Rev. Isaac Jones - - - -	1810
Appleton Howe A. B. - - - -	1815

Such has been the town, Church, Ministers, Deacons, graduates, and such the state of society, for an hundred years.

What now remains is to conclude the subject with some reflections on what has been said, and some advice in the choice and treatment of another minister.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever."

Your habits are so firmly fixed, that no reformation is to be expected during my ministry; and, indeed, it would require more power in the Deity to effect it, than it did to create the world. For when he created the world, he had only to say; "let there be light, and there was light." But to bring you to a sense of justice and equity, he must overcome your private, personal attachment to your own *supposed* worldly interest; and that would require more *power* than it did to create the world!

And beside, my life is so far spent, that should you reform, it is doubtful, whether it would produce any very beneficial effects on my labors. I mean to tell the whole truth, without partiality, or respect of persons.

1. Then, we see from this subject, that when a people are unjust to their minister, they do not know where they are going, any more than the man, who goes to the tavern, into company, to the gambling table, to intemperance, family quarrelling, poverty, sickness, death and hell! Such persons frequently think they are walking at liberty, when they are, in reality, bringing themselves under the severest of all masters.

Just so, quarrels, divisions, contentions, separations, meeting-houses, lawsuits, are the consequences of injustice to ministers.

When a people begin to step on the devil's ground, they do not know when they shall stop.

2. We see from this subject the meaning of that part of the second commandment, which speaks "of visiting the iniquities of the fathers, upon the children, to the third and fourth generation." The injustice of the fathers to their minister, falls on their children, in the loss of that religious order, instruction, and discipline, which they would have received, had the fathers been just and equitable; and it descends to the third and fourth generation, in contentions, divisions, and every evil work.

3. We may see from this subject, what abundant gratitude *we ought to feel*, to the Creator and Governor of the world, that we can live in so much harmony, when we have had so many things to disturb our peace. The half-way covenant,—religious sentiments,—politics,—Church discipline,—and the want of justice, and equity, in the support of the gospel!!

All, which now remains, is to give you some advice in your choice, and treatment of another minister. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. In a little time more, this sacred desk will be left vacant by my dismission, or death. This countenance you will see no more, in the land of the living; the tongue which now speaks will be silent; and these eyes closed in death. Then, you will need another minister. Will you receive the word of exhortation, from one, who has had some experience in the gospel ministry, and who thinks he wishes your temporal and spiritual good?

Look out a man of good natural understanding, of a good education, and a pious heart: and this you must learn, not so much from his profession, as practice. For when men talk very freely of their own piety, we have

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reason to doubt their sincerity. "Empty vessels sound the loudest."

When you have found a man of good natural abilities, of a good education, and pious heart; settle him. Give him a generous and honorable support, and pay him punctually; as you have paid me. This you must do as a duty you owe to God, to yourselves, and your children. To enable him to apply himself to the work of the ministry, if his salary depreciate ten per cent, make it good; if fifty per cent, make it good: if it depreciates to half its original value, double it: this you must do to convince him, you mean to be honest; and that he has no occasion to be troubled about worldly things.

Attend on his ministry constantly; you build shoolhouses, and support school masters; but of what consequence is this, unless you send your children to school? Just so it is with respect to a minister. You may have a minister, and pay him seventy pounds salary, or seventy times seven, but if you do not attend on his ministry, it is all lost.

Pray for him sincerely and piously: this will bring you to the house of God in a suitable frame: this will prepare you to receive the gospel from his lips, and to be savingly benefited by its blessed effects.

And one thing more. Live at peace among yourselves. —"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." —"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

If ye do these things, prosperity will attend you on earth, and heaven will be your eternal portion.

* Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

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